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THE PEOPLE OF THE PERPETRATOR  
STATES AS VICTIMS.

by

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ABSTRACT: The literature on the victims of genocides is considerable. However, there is much less discussion of the effects of genocides on the people of the perpetrator states. This paper examines several cases of ideological genocide in order to assess the costs incurred and the extent to which the people of perpetrator states may be considered as victims of a certain kind. Starting with some early cases, like the Albigensian Crusade, several twentieth century cases will receive particular attention. Knowledge of the facts of the losses incurred by the perpetrator societies may in time become accepted as conventional wisdom, and thus contribute to the prevention of future genocides.

Genocide is a new word for an ancient crime that has been practiced from antiquity to the present day. In this paper I do not want to deal with definitions and typologies, important as these are.<sup>1</sup> Instead, I want to explore an avenue for the prevention of genocides that does not require their prediction in specific places at specific times.

The occurrence of genocides throughout history in all parts of the world raises many important questions. Surely the most important of these questions is: Why have genocides always been so popular? Why have they recurred in such widely differing situations and under such diverse conditions? The answer seems to lie in their efficacy. They do, in fact, solve a perpetrator's problem so efficiently that it not only is solved, but also stays solved. The costs of such solutions are borne by the victims; but since historically the victims are located outside the perpetrator society,

such victim costs need not enter into any cost-benefit calculation by the perpetrator. Thus, the perpetrator society reaped enormous benefits while bearing only minimal costs.

This sketchy analysis seems to hold true until the Middle Ages, when a new type of genocide was invented. This new type is ideological genocide, committed to enforce conformity to a belief, theory, or ideology.<sup>2</sup> What is particularly new about this type of genocide is that it is most often practiced on members of the perpetrator's own society. While other types of genocide have decreased in frequency, this new type has increased dramatically in the twentieth century. It is with this new type that we are concerned in this paper because it radically changes the cost-benefit calculation -- a calculation that is not usually performed before the event. I hope to argue convincingly that if such calculation were taken into consideration, most perpetrators would reconsider their plans. The reason is that in ideological genocides both the benefits and the costs have to be absorbed within the perpetrator society.

In ideological genocides the benefits are hard to measure. In all other types of genocides the benefits to the perpetrators are easily measured in terms of economic gains, eliminated enemies, or terrorized opponents. In ideological genocides the only possible benefit is the enforcement of an ideological imperative -- a benefit mainly in the eyes of the adherents to the perpetrator's ideology. This is not true for the costs; since the victim groups are contained within the perpetrator society, the latter also has to bear the costs. These costs are, however, not primarily of an ideological

character, but are easily measured in terms of the human and material effects on the perpetrator society.

An empirical study of the relevant cases will show not only that the costs to the perpetrators of ideological genocides are enormous, but also that it takes a very long time to recover from the ravages resulting from these costs. (Needless to add that we are here not concerned with the fact that some individuals may have enriched themselves.) Thorough research in this area remains to be done. Some preliminary results are presented below, and they should motivate a series of intensive case studies whose results ought to be widely disseminated. Such publicity may convince potential perpetrators that ideological genocides can be performed only at enormous costs to their own society and that the historical beliefs about the benefits of genocides have been invalidated by more recent events.

The following brief sketches of some case studies are intended to convey an idea of the direction of the argument by presenting some typical cases; the list is not meant to be exhaustive.

The ALBIGENSIAN CRUSADE<sup>3</sup> took place in the first half of the thirteenth century in the Languedoc which at that time (when Berlin was just beginning to be founded) was probably the richest area in Europe in terms of agriculture, trade, culture, and the standard of living of its people; it also was not yet included in the realm of the king of France. Several heresies flourished and found an interested hearing even among the aristocracy and especially at the court of the Count of Toulouse. This tolerance was not shared by the papal authorities who shortly called for a

crusade to wipe out this threat to their authority. The king of France fielded the required troops and reaped the benefits of enlarging his kingdom.

The crusaders not only killed the heretics and their sympathizers, they also uprooted the vineyards and cut down the orchards. The crusade was too successful; it not only exterminated the heretics, it also ruined agriculture and commerce so thoroughly that the area has not fully recovered to this day.

The ALBIGENSIAN CRUSADE was a transitional case in the sense that the victims were a group outside the perpetrator state (as had been true of historic genocides) while the motive was to enforce conformity to a belief system (which is an early case in the transition to the ideological genocides so common in the twentieth century). This case is included here to highlight the main point of this paper. When the victims were located outside the perpetrator state, it was obvious that the victim society/state suffered enormously -- this was so obvious that nobody seriously questioned it. It was also taken for granted that the perpetrator state reaped benefits in terms of wealth and acquisition of territory. When the victim group is located inside the perpetrator state a great deal of this cost and suffering does not simply disappear -- it is now located inside the perpetrator state and cannot be confined only to the victim group. This phenomenon has received very little attention, although the proposition that a state can victimize and exterminate one of its constituent parts without damage to the whole seems on the surface implausible. This

important point should become clearer by examining several cases where the perpetrator state victimizes one of its constituent parts. These cases occur most frequently in the twentieth century and involve most often an ideological genocide.

The SPANISH INQUISITION<sup>4</sup> is not usually considered a genocide at all because the non-believers were given a choice of emigrating or converting to Christianity. The goal was to create a homogeneous Catholic realm. The converts were, however, never fully accepted; even after several generations they were still referred to as "new christians" and suspected of secretly practicing their former religion. Such accusations were impossible to disprove and the victims were severely punished, including burning at the stake. Many had to flee for their lives. Before the expulsion of the Jews and the Moors and the persecution of the conversos (or marranos, as converted Jews were referred to) and moriscos (converted Moors) Spain flourished, not only economically. It was a seat of learning, philosophy, and the arts. Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, and Latin language and literature interacted through translation and enriched each other. Spanish culture and learning influenced much of Europe.

The expansion of trade and the establishment of colonies by both Spain and Portugal took place during the same period. Iberian ships sailed to the ends of the world. But even here the motives were not purely economic. While trade and the acquisition of wealth financed the journeys, spreading the gospel and saving souls justified them. The proselytizing was done so successfully that in the early seventeenth century it caused Japan

to pass several exclusion acts which effectively closed that country to the rest of the world until the nineteenth century.

After the purification of Spain from all non-Catholic influences it began to stagnate. For a while the newly acquired colonies kept it afloat economically. The cultural decline was much more rapid. In both areas Spain has not recovered to this day. Its economy is still one of the poorer ones in Europe; its cultural and intellectual life has still not produced a world-class university. It seems clear that the cost of enforcing conformity to a homogeneously Catholic society has been very high.

The ARMENIANS<sup>5</sup> were the victims of a genocide carried out during World War I by Turkey which then was an ally of Germany. The Ottoman empire had been declining for some time and Turkey was trying to orient itself toward a nationalistic ideology centered on the image of a Turkic state in which there was no room for a foreign, non-Moslem group. While the Armenians were predominantly peasants, they also played a major role in the skilled trades, the commerce, and the professions of the country. Their elimination had both short-term and long-term consequences. The former became almost immediately felt during the war. A couple of illustrations must suffice here.

The completion of the Berlin-Baghdad railroad, which had been started before the war, was considered of prime strategic importance, especially since there were very few all-weather roads in Turkey. The German embassy and the railroad company's management tried very hard to convince the Turkish rulers that the completion of the railroad was a top

priority within the overall war effort -- without success. The majority of the workers were Armenians and they were slaughtered. The result was that the railroad was not completed. Another illustration comes from a military hospital full of wounded Turkish soldiers and staffed almost entirely by Armenian doctors and nurses. Again, inspite of pleading to the contrary, the Armenians were eliminated and the hospital was left with almost no staff to care for the wounded.

The long-range costs of the genocide of the Armenians are more diffuse and not quite as easy to demonstrate. In addition to losing the war, Turkey had also lost much of its skilled labour force, its professionals, and its commercial and trading resources. This has dramatically retarded its development, the effects of which are observable to this day.

The people of the U.S.S.R.<sup>6</sup> experienced a great deal of persecution under Stalin's regime of terror. Scholars disagree on which of his several campaigns should be considered genocidal -- a debate that will not be addressed in this paper. What is relevant here is that it is quite easy to demonstrate the enormous costs of these genocidal campaigns to Russian society. Thus, in the nineteen thirties Stalin decided to eliminate the so-called class of Kulaks. Many were killed outright, many more died in the Gulag, and the survivors acquiesced to collectivized agriculture. What had been an agriculture that without modern equipment like tractors and combines had produced a large surplus for export, became an agriculture that has not recovered to this day; the U.S.S.R. became an importer of food stuffs and has remained so to this day.

A little later Stalin decided that the military were not to be trusted. He proceeded to wipe out almost the entire officer corps. When Germany attacked in spite of Stalin's pact with Hitler, the Russian war effort was in the hands of inexperienced and rapidly promoted junior officers. It seems reasonable to suppose that there might have been fewer defeats and lower casualties if the senior officers had remained in command.

Even the authorities in Moscow have lately begun to acknowledge the excesses of the Stalin regime and the costs to their society. Therefore, there is no need to go into the other genocidal persecutions of the Stalin regime.

The case of NAZI GERMANY AND THE HOLOCAUST<sup>7</sup> is a very special one, in this context as well as others: first, because Germany has openly acknowledged its guilt, and second, because German scholars themselves have started to look at the costs to Germany. These costs may be roughly divided into those incurred up to the end of World War II and those continuing to be exacted since then.

In the first category may be cited the loss of human resources in those areas where the Jews excelled. But even when Jews were used only as slave labour in factories associated with concentration camps, it was more important to kill them than to let them work. Thus, the I.G.Farben artificial rubber plant near Auschwitz had by the end of the war not produced a single pound of rubber. It has also been suggested that the extensive use of rail transport during the Holocaust interfered with sending troops and materiel to the front. In the extreme case, one could

argue, though never prove, that without the costs of the Holocaust Germany might have won the war -- in part because it would probably have had the atom bomb first.

In the second category of costs, those incurred after World War II, one would start with the enormous loss of talent and expertise that is clearly observable in those areas where the Jews had excelled. One might also point to the loss of international prestige as the information about what had happened spread throughout the world. The division into the two Germanies is by most Germans considered a major loss. Certainly, one might write a whole book about the many ways in which the world, particularly the Western world, would have been a different place had the Holocaust and its costs not changed it in so many ways.

CAMBODIA, now called KAMPUCHEA,<sup>8</sup> will be the last case to be mentioned. Here we have an almost pure case of ideological genocide. Pol Pot and his cohorts sacrificed a significant proportion of their country's population to their image of an ideal society. In this process, they not only killed millions of their own people, but they also destroyed the web of social relations, the cities, the educational and health system, etc. In order to erase so-called Western influences. In a few short years they managed to reduce the country to an almost stone age primitiveness and poverty. There is just no question that the genocide reduced the perpetrator society to total bankruptcy in both human and material terms. No people should have to bear such costs.

The list could be continued. But I think that the point is quite clear.

Genocides that victimize a part of the population of the perpetrator country impose a huge cost on the perpetrator society. These costs are paid by many succeeding generations.

The lesson of history was, and still seems to be, that genocides produce material benefits for the perpetrator. This was undoubtedly the case when the victims of genocides were a people outside the perpetrator society. But the process works differently when the victims are located within, and are part of, the perpetrator society. In that case there are no benefits. Instead, there remain only enormous costs.

For those of us who are committed to the prediction and the prevention of genocide this seems to open up another possible avenue of action. If further research will confirm my conclusion, and if we can publicize this finding sufficiently, we may eventually be able to change the out-dated lesson of history about the benefits of genocide. The new lesson will be that genocides can be carried out only at enormous costs to the perpetrator society and that even the potential ideological benefits are never realized.

Such analysis should be incorporated into the curriculum of the many courses on genocide and the Holocaust that are being established. In North America such course materials are being widely introduced in high schools, colleges, and universities. Curriculum proposals seem to generate heated debates about cases to be included or excluded. However, there is little debate about how to cover prediction and prevention -- in part because as yet there is so little known in this area. If the above analysis is confirmed

by detailed case studies, the results should be added to the curriculum so that eventually this knowledge attains the status of conventional wisdom.

It seems very unlikely that with such conventional wisdom in wide currency, there would be many potential perpetrators who would be tempted to test this finding on their own society, or that their own people would support them in such plans. This latter point is crucial for the prevention of future genocides; the carrying out of a massive genocide does not necessarily require the active support of the population, but it does minimally require their passive acquiescence -- and even that is hardly likely to be forthcoming if the prospect of the enormous costs has acquired the status of conventional wisdom.

If the above argument sounds at all plausible, I hope that some colleagues will join me in doing the research to buttress this finding and in spreading the results.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Kurt Jonassohn and Frank Chalk, "A Typology of Genocide and some Implications for the Human Rights Agenda," in Genocide and the Modern Age, eds. I.Wallimann and M.N.Dobkowski (New York: Greenwood, 1987). See also: Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, The History and Sociology of Genocide (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, forthcoming in 1989).

<sup>2</sup> Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, "The History and Sociology of Genocidal Killings," in Genocide: A Critical Bibliographic Review, ed., Israel Charny (London: Mansell, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> For details see: Jacques Madaule, The Albigensian Crusade (New York: Fordham University Press, 1967) and Zoé Oldenbourg, Massacre at Montségur (New York: Pantheon, 1961) and W.L.Wakefield, Heresy, Crusade

and Inquisition in Southern France, 1100-1250 (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974).

<sup>4</sup> For details see: Henry Kamen, The Spanish Inquisition (London: White Lion Publishers, 1976) and Juan A. Llorente, History of the Spanish Inquisition (New York: G.C. Morgan, 1826) and Cecil Roth, The Spanish Inquisition (New York: Norton, 1964; c.1937).

<sup>5</sup> For details see: R.G. Hovannian, ed., The Armenian Genocide in Perspective (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1986) and V.N. Dadrian, "The Role of Turkish Physicians in the World War I Genocide of Ottoman Armenians." Holocaust and Genocide Studies 1, no. 2 (1986) pp. 169-192 and Ulrich Trumpener, Germany and the Ottoman Empire: 1914-1918 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).

<sup>6</sup> Anton Antonov-Ovseyenko, The Time of Stalin: Portrait of a Tyrant (New York: Harper, 1981) and Robert Conquest, The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties (New York: Macmillan, 1968) and James Mace, "The Man-made Famine of 1933 in the Soviet Ukraine: What Happened and Why?" in Toward the Understanding and Prevention of Genocide, ed., Israel Charny (Boulder: Westview, 1984)

<sup>7</sup> For such views see: Rainer C. Baum, The Holocaust and the German Elite: Genocide and National Suicide in Germany, 1871-1945 (London: Croom Helm, 1981) and Bernt Engelmann, Germany Without Jews (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1984) and Sebastian Haffner, The Meaning of Hitler (New York: Macmillan, 1979) and Robert Simon Yavner, I.G. Farben's Petro-Chemical Plant at Auschwitz (M.A. thesis, Old Dominion University, 1984).

<sup>8</sup> For details see: David P. Chandler and Ben Kiernan, eds., Revolution and its Aftermath in Kampuchea: Eight Essays (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Research Monograph No. 25, 1983) and Craig Etcheson, The Rise and Demise of Democratic Kampuchea (Boulder: Westview, 1984) and Molyda Szymusiak, The Stones Cry Out (New York: Hill & Wang, 1986).

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